



Undergraduate Dissertation coversheet & feedback form

PLEASE COMPLETE THE TOP SECTION OF THIS FORM AND SUBMIT ONE COPY WITH YOUR DISSERTATION

For completion by student:

Student Name:

Scot Robert Jamieson

Student **University** Email: 1501527@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Module code: HPPH 6025

Student ID number:

1501527

*Educational
support needs:
Yes/No*

Dissertation title: Classic World of Warcraft: The False promise of Blizzard and the Task of Player's, a study of Authenticity.

Supervisor: Rebbeka Humphreys

Word count: 9056

I confirm that this is my original work and that I have adhered to the University policy on plagiarism.

Signed Scot Jamieson.....

For completion by the first marker:

Comments:

First Marker's Mark:

Date:

Signature:

For completion by the second marker (if appropriate):

Comments:

Second Marker's Mark:
Signature:

Date:

NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.

For completion by the External Examiner:

Comments:

Proposed Mark:

Signature of External Examiner:

Final Agreed Mark:

Classic World of Warcraft: The False promise of Blizzard and the Task of Player's, a study of Authenticity.

‘A theses submitted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in fulfilment of the requirements for A Bachelor's Degree of Philosophy’

2019

Scot Jamieson

Contents

Introduction	4
Section for the reader.	7
Why can Warcraft be a subject of philosophical Study?	9
The Problem of Authenticity	11
What is Authenticity?	13
Views on authenticity.....	14
My take on authenticity.	18
‘Min/ Maxing’ and the over exposure of ideas.	21
Guilds as Social Contracts.....	23
Playing the game your way.	26
Conclusion.	29
Bibliography.	32

Introduction

‘Philosophy should not be thought of primarily either as an attempt to investigate and understand the self or the world, or as a special occupation that concerns only a few. Rather, philosophy must be thought of as fully integrated within life. To be sure, there may need to be professional philosophers, who develop an elaborate set of methods and concepts (Sartre makes this point frequently) but life can be lived philosophically without a technical knowledge of philosophy’¹

I think that this quote captures the essence of why I have chosen to undertake studies into my subjects. It would have been boosting to my ego had I figured out a way to elucidate upon some magnificent truth but also it would have been very separate of what I have come to understand as philosophy. Philosophy to me represents a want to explore and understand it represents a way to wonder when all other roads are straight. That is why I have chosen to try and create a feeling of doing philosophy with my audience rather than describing to them something I think I have figured out.

My dissertation is to be based around subjects that I enjoy both new and old. I have chosen to use philosophy and the skills I have learnt by studying it to try to understand and elucidate upon an antidote for a problem being caused to followers of the same Game that I enjoy.

World of Warcraft is an online MMORPG which means it is almost like a miniature world that exists within the internet. It has been around since 2004 and in 2007 introduced its first expansion “The Burning Crusade”. The time period of 2004-2007 in relation to World of Warcraft has become known as “Vanilla WoW” in reference to the original flavour of the game; it was unlike any other of its time.

¹ <https://www.iep.utm.edu/existent/>, Existentialism, Philosophy as Way of Life, Accessed 19th May 2019

World of Warcraft has since seen multiple expansions and exists as a game almost unrecognisable to player who played back in 2004, this rapid growth and change of dynamic has had players of the original asking for a re-release of the game for only the “Vanilla WoW” period. Last year at Blizzard’s annual festival “BlizzCon”². Blizzard being the publishers of World of Warcraft, they announced to fans joy, that they would indeed be re-realising “Vannila WoW”.

Now the reason I see this as an appropriate topic for a philosophy Dissertation is because this phenomenon of going backwards to go forwards is seemingly happening in other aspects of life.

Brexit existed amongst and created ideas revolving around a return to a way Britain once was, a return back to old ways. The movie industry is recreating movies from our childhood with new visual technologies and Blizzard are not the first game company to re-release and old game Format, Runescape and the Call of Duty franchise have both remastered or re-released old games.

My problem is not with the replication, rather with what it means for a player to be playing these games, and how someone returning to an old game still can have an enjoyable experience. What particularly took my interest was a segment in the video containing information on Blizzard’s plans for what they want from Classic WoW, which is what the re-released version of “Vanilla WoW” is referred to as. They plan to give player’s an “authentic experience” and upon hearing this I knew that I could create an argument around the expectations player’s should have for classic WoW.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhKkP8LryYM>, Restoring History: Creating WoW Classic (BlizzCon Classic Panel), 04 November 2018, Accessed December 1st 2018.

Authenticity is a subject I have studied whilst in University, it and existentialism are some of my most enjoyed topics, they're very much topics that follow in the tradition of philosophies that seeks to ask questions and deliberate over the curiosities of what it is to be a person, the answers I will be able to give in regards to authenticity will be like another perspective for player's or a viewpoint and as I'm seeking to show in my dissertation that authenticity is something both player and Blizzard need to be concerned about, it will allow me to explore the subjects I've chosen to analyse as if I were giving council to player's rather than prescribing them a way of playing, whilst also allowing them to explore tool's to continually do philosophy whilst in the game.

At the end of my dissertation I will give a section to why I think arguing for a viewpoint rather than a categorical way to play, is better suited to a philosophy based upon a game.

Throughout the dissertation I will try to show how first Blizzard cannot promise an authentic experience of the "Vannila WoW" period, I will do this by trying to find a suitable description of what authenticity is, and when I have done this I will use it to show how it is not compatible with what Blizzard can deliver.

After this I will explore what it means for a player to be authentic in a re-made game and how there are a multitude of in game factors that might make World of Warcraft a game in which authenticity is a difficult thing to achieve.

Throughout my dissertation I will be returning to point on authenticity in the hopes of showing all of the ways in which one can become in-authentic, I will show how authenticity is a positive trait but also be empathetic to the idea that in-authenticity is not wholly a negative trait and is can be reconciled with our new found authenticity.

The overall Aim of my dissertation is to remind player's returning and new, that "Vanilla WoW" and the greatness it achieved happened because of the player base and their interactions with the world. Blizzard did everything they could to make sure that your experience whilst in their world was enjoyable, but the main contributing factors were always other players. I will show throughout my dissertation the ways in which player interaction will not be the same as before, and how 15 years of change, may have made it impossible to enjoy the game the way it was before. Whilst also trying to show how replication of the past and the want to return to old ways can cause a different kind of damage upon player experiences.

I will be arguing that a Key to "Classic WoW's" success in terms of player's enjoyment will rest upon their ability to stay authentic, and that it is possible to do so whilst having many social and game factors that increase the levels of In-authenticity.

Section for the reader.

The majority of the dialogue within my dissertation is likely to involve terms and phenomena not familiar with the reader, it is however to my belief that this will disturb the reader's ability to understand the concepts and idea's involved within the dissertation, as they are common themes within philosophy.

I would like to ask the reader to also remember whilst reading that this dissertation is intimately linked with the experience of people playing this game, and this may to seem like a problem for the reader if they've never played. What I'd like the reader to think is that World of Warcraft to the vast majority of its player base is a form of escape or enjoyment, a place for them to spend time and relax. Many players have made a career from playing but this isn't something that happened until the recent past.

From this I ask the reader to imagine as if World of Warcraft were akin to one of their favourite past times, so that they can understand why the current state of the game may diminish some of the enjoyment and set a rigidity to it they may make the playing experience a lot different to how it was supposed to be enjoyed.

What World of Warcraft is supposed to produce is a sense of immersion, and I'd like to breathily explain what is meant by this. When playing World of Warcraft, you're supposed to forget that you're playing a game, you're supposed to feel a part of the world. When the game first released this feeling was easy to fall into as there was a sense of exploration and adventure, the world had yet to be found out about and this helped players form a relationship with the world they played in.

When the sense of immersion fails players start to find it more difficult to find enjoyment out of the game's activities. A lot of my dissertation will be about how to allow a player to always be analytical of whether or not they're playing for their own enjoyment or because of routine. I believe that they can do this by having an understanding of what authenticity is and how it can help to create a more rewarding play experience.

Player burnout is something that will also be hard for any non-player to understand as it represents not just a boredom of the game, but a disconnection from what you want to achieve within the game and what you can actually achieve, not every player will reach the dizzying heights of internet stardom, but more and more as computer games have progressed players have begun to emulate the successes of the best and this has slowly led to a "Meta" in which a rush for completion and maxing out character gear has emerged. In this rush players can lose sense of the reasons they play the game, I would say it is a very mild form of an existential crisis within the game that

leaves the player unable to gain satisfaction for reasons they cannot fully understand. Authenticity of play may help a player to quell these feeling of game based existential dread.

I have created a section of information regarding World of Warcraft and the reader can find countless videos upon YouTube and other media stations that will allow them to get a feel for the phenomena that is World of Warcraft.

Why can Warcraft be a subject of philosophical Study?

World of Warcraft, represents a world inside of a world. It may be digital but it is not immaterial and I think that this gives it enough credit to be sustained as an object within the world. It's a phenomenon that has held the attention of millions worldwide and is solidified within pop culture, and from the way I intend to involve it within my study is to see it as a society itself.

If we see World of Warcraft as a place inhabited by a multitude of individuals that come together in order to achieve goals and enjoyment for individual and collective alike then you can see how it can be described as a society. The internet owes countless hours of videos and literature to fans of the game and it has become a thing that people bond over and even create vast groups of friends that will know each other for years.

Although the events within World of Warcraft will never happen outside of the screen, the feelings thoughts and involvements of players in the real world are of value to philosophy.

The players of "Classic WoW" will be embarking upon a journey into a new world, and with all exploration we have to think about how we will conduct ourselves upon arrival

and for what reasons we will do so. Having authenticity as a subject of referral will help players to find ways in which they can continually enjoy the game. This is why I think involving the topic of Warcraft within a study of authenticity will be philosophically interesting.

Another topic of interest you will find within online games of a competitive nature is the existence of a phenomena referred to as the “Meta”, what this is is the indistinguishable force of player based interaction that creates trends within the game whilst also standing as the point of which to find contradictions allowing for continuation of growth within the game.

The “Meta” is an ever changing phenomena that is created by player whilst also influencing them, it’s incredibly difficult to explain as most players would describe their knowledge of it at best to be of an approximate kind. One develops a feel for the “Meta” and notices its slight movements from within its influential sphere. This phenomenon is of much philosophical value I believe and will be an obstacle in the way of authenticity throughout my dissertation.

Warcraft represents a treasure trove of philosophical queries and nuances, player’s interaction with their characters could be studied by anyone interested in the philosophy of mind and the types of systems used within guilds and group interaction for anyone who has an interest in ethics. The events that happen in the game are real world event in so much as they effect real world people.

World of Warcraft’s terms:

The world of Warcraft has within it, a use of language that developed mostly around people only being able to communicate through written formats for the early years of Warcraft, it think it may therefore be appropriate to list a number of the abbreviations or terms that you will encounter throughout this dissertation.

. “Classic WoW”- When this term is used I am referring the version of the game to be re-released.

. ”Vannila WoW”- This is a reference to the 2004 version of the game

. Tank/DPS/Healer- In order to complete dungeons within World of Warcraft you need to have a balanced group of 5 players, this usually consists of a tank-the person who absorbs damage, DPS- the people who deal damage and a Healer- Keep the party alive.

. “Endgame”- refers to the content available within the game at the last level of the game.

. ”WoW”- refers to World of Warcraft as a whole.

“Players”- The individual people that control character actions.

I have given links in my bibliography that will refer the read to material concerning World of Warcraft and it may be beneficial to explore them prior to reading on.

The Problem of Authenticity

Classic World of Warcraft’s design philosophy included one point that has raised much speculation “Authentic Vanilla experience”. Blizzard the company that run the game, hope to achieve a feeling for the players that almost sends them back in time. Beyond nostalgia they want to deliver the same game that was released back in 2004 and took the PC-Gaming world by storm.

It sounds simple enough, I thought it sounded simple, however there’s much more to restoring a game than I could have imagined prior to watching the “BlizzCon” announcement of the upcoming Classic servers. They video runs you through a whole list of design nuances that the team must overcome in order to make a 15-year-old game work amongst technology and outlets that have grown exponentially since it’s conception.

As a player of the original, second and third instalments of World of Warcraft this want for authenticity worried me and it’s where I’d like to introduce my first dilemma with Blizzards want for authenticity.

It is not only technology that has not just changed hardware, it has changed software, and from this the modes of communication have become uncountable. Jokes that were funny in 2004 are stored within the archives of the internet, videos, that fuelled the small talk and hilarities that would happen amongst players. The entire way in which our society's focus is directed has shifted since World of Warcraft first launched, and although this seems like an obvious point, I want to explain that this is important in a quest for authenticity.

When you remember that World of Warcraft players are just people, you can think about how a person's thoughts can be shaped by their position in the world, their constitutional luck in a sense. Much of why they do and what they do it for has been somewhat influenced by factors they do not control. If we say that the time period in which the original World of Warcraft, events happened in the world that can now only be replicated. Then these events had effect on the thoughts and lives of Players and created situations. These situations could be replicated or remembered, but the feeling and mood created from these replications won't be the original feeling caused. This sounds like I'm being picky, however there have been some moments in Warcraft's playing history that could be replicated a thousand times, that would never quite be as funny or awe inspiring as the first time we saw them. People remind you about the first time they saw the Molten Core, not the 5th.

The main point I am trying to articulate is that the ethics the levels of humility and fair play are all contingent upon the social sphere of players within a specific realm. The ideas that float through the wider social sphere in 2004 are vastly different than they are now, things have progressed not always in the positive way but they have moved forward. This has a direct effect on the thoughts and social interactions of new players when the game releases.

This lead me to think that Blizzard do not mean to turn back time when they release Classic WoW again. However, it is interest to think about if something as simple as time could cause Blizzard to have to take back their promise. I think that I should have a clear and succinct definition of what I mean by authentic, going forward, in order to establish a coherent Dissertation.

What is Authenticity?

Authenticity is philosophical reaction to the determined forces in the world, natural or social that directly determine factors within our own live. There are many things about me that are circumstantial upon things I couldn't control I could make a long list but I think it best explain with an analogy involving playing World of Warcraft. In the game you chose a race and a class to play as, these race's and classes have a restricted and defined set of abilities which are completely different from the other classes.

On a single sever that reach a play population of around 3500 you could have 600 warriors as they're a popular choice, and amongst those Warriors there would be good warriors and bad warriors, in regards to playing capabilities, there would be warriors that mastered their class and taught the world how to play them in a multitude of way and there would be players who just enjoyed playing a warrior. How is it that given the same abilities the same ways to progress the same lessons all the warriors you will meet will be different, well everyone brings a level of authenticity in what they do, when you are the master of your own thoughts and you choose what you are doing because of factor you influence, then you're being authentic, and it make sense that people play differently, as they may not be authentic all of the time, but everyone has

flicker. This is at best a layman's explanations of authenticity and I will give some more philosophical notes to it shortly.

As you can see this could be important for a player, “Classic WoW” has closed server populations meaning that the people you inhabit the world with, will always be the same people and in order to succeed in the World you need to make yourself known, you have to do this whilst competing amongst many players who play the exact same thing as you. In reaction to this in order to be useful, you must create things about you that make you useful, there are certain things that people will find useful and they’re limited, which means you have to limit yourself to succeed and I wonder if this is a risk to your authenticity.

I think before I ask question like this I need to create a meaning of authenticity that can somewhat be agreed upon by more than myself. I will try to describe an accurate meaning of authenticity by first exploring what other philosophers have said upon the subject and then examine their meanings in reference to World of Warcraft. Hopefully by finding a suitable description of what authenticity is I will be able to ask a suitable amount of philosophically minded questions like, well what does it mean for a game to be authentic, especially if it’s a rerelease and how does a player re-play a game in an authentic way, especially returning player as they’ve done it all before. These are the questions I will be trying to answer.

Views on authenticity

Kierkegaard's views on authenticity are a reaction to the contemporary society of his time. His views on the subject revolve around the idea that one is to become “what one is”. This can be understood as figuring out what one truly is between all the things that they have been created to be. Kierkegaard believed that the institutions and way of

life made it so that we humans are seen more as objects amongst other objects with no special essence or attribute that makes them special and that it requires a “passionate” commitment to self-understanding and social nuances that could create a mode of thought in which you are able to create meaning within the world and out of other objects and pursuits that are meaningful to you, not because, of what society deems meaningful but because you have been able to come to an understanding of oneself amongst the world you’ve been thrown into.

Kierkegaard believes that when someone recognizes that to follow the herd and go throughout life without questioning what you are or how life works, then you will go through life following a way to be that doesn’t best suit you. Kierkegaard believed that society inherently influences us with a form of in-authenticity, and it is up to our own deliberations if we can recognize and change that situation.

I can understand Kierkegaard's point of view, but I wonder if he thinks about somethings we do in repetitions and without a large amount of authenticity in an unnecessarily negative way. If we think about tradition and social events that happen yearly do not damage our being’s when we do them in a way that isn’t authentic, we remember people and celebrate holidays in order to solidify bonds a create memories. Christmas for instance as a Holiday celebration could be seen by Kierkegaard as in-authentic and “Hollowing” due to it being something handed to generations by the previous. However, the reality is that Christmas is never the same and amongst families it differs vastly and by having an in-authentic holiday yearly constantly do we have to reassess why it is important to celebrate it and if all the social norms that surrounded it are appropriate feeling we wish to replicate as an individual. Sometimes events become things done by the “Herd” because of the sentiment or sincerity in the act’s done. Like each guild created in World of Warcraft, the ways in which you create a guild will

always be similar but the structures within the guilds the relationships formed and the overall dynamic of the guild, whilst be affected by a somewhat “herd” mentality, within this a new mentality is created or has the chance to be and I believe this could be authentic. I think Kierkegaard wants us to realise what is important to our own Authenticity and this does not mean by constantly creating new things, but rather by constantly addressing the worth of actions and events upon our own being.

Heidegger is also a philosopher whose ideas on authenticity I shall be looking at as it is said they echo Kierkegaard's which will give us a difference of opinions whilst also being close enough to compare ideas.

Heidegger refers to people as “dasein” which can be translated to “being-there” and this is where one of the first differences of his and Kierkegaard's ideas on Authenticity differ. “being-there” isn’t supposed to be a static attribute, “being-there” is almost a description of our ontological state is what I believe from exploring Heidegger’s work as a “Dasein” has the ability to understand what one is within a given moment but also has the imaginative powers to also understand that there are a multitude of possible future scenarios and realises it actions now effect the circumstances of the future. With Keirkegaard I get the feeling that the self is actualised more and more as we start to deliberate on our position within society and how much it has affected our decision-making processes, “Dasein” as Heidegger refers to us is already concerned with who we are as a person as we are already able to realise the possibilities of many futures and how our decisions now make a mark on who we are to be going forward in time. So, in a sense for Heidegger we are always a part authentic as we are ourselves and we have a way we want to be and this is the type of authenticity I was trying to elude to when I gave the example of their being differences is all of the Warriors playing on a single server. Each warrior need to recognise what is within them,

what type of “Dasein” they’re an actualise it, rather than trying to replicate whatever warrior is the “best” as the “best” Warrior is of a different “Dasein” which is unachievable to the mimic.

But this is not what Heidegger want us to be satisfied with regarding being authentic. And I believe that it would be right to want because we mean more by authenticity than just being different or wanting certain things. Wanting things and future planning are something we all naturally do, we just do it in our own way, which means we need more to be authentic as although we don’t have a definition yet, being authentic is not the same as doing things as an individual to create a future preferred by that individual, Authenticity is more to do with having a hold and understanding on who that individual is and why they want things whilst having the ability to directly affect the thing things they want and think about.

In order to first understand what it is to be authentic there is one major road bump for us to overcome and this Heidegger referred to as “they”, “they” represents the shared social context, we will always be social creatures in a sense and because of this there will always be ways of being things or filling roles that return us back to doing things like they have been done before because that is how they’re done within our given social context. If I want to be a tank in World of Warcraft then I’ll need a shield and sword and I will also have to hold the focus of the enemy creatures we come across, I might tank the dungeon in a route you’re not used to, however to be the tank I need to adhere to a set way of doing things that has been passed down throughout Warcraft’s history. Even if I tank in a way you haven’t encountered before we’re still in a sense adhering to the rules set down by “they” by doing the task in a group made up of the already defined best classes and set way of being that class. WoW’s history decided that it’s best to have a tank a healer and 3 dps and this is the way dungeons are done and

even if I am doing them for my own wants and desires, I'm still affected in a sense by the social history of "they".

Heidegger refers to this doing what one does because it's the way things are done as "fallenness" and continual practice of it will take us further away from living an authentic existence's whilst giving us the illusion that we're making these choices as an authentic person as we are "Daisien"

This is what player's become at risk of falling into when they create a class. A sense that they need to play it like everyone else does, like "they" say to play.

Heidegger's solution to becoming authentic rests around our ability to understand ourselves as beings with an almost duality, we are beings related to "they" in a sense we cannot escape of social context and it will create us in a way, but our ability to understand this allows us to recognise our "ownness" allows us to recognize that the implications of our actions and our desires can be directly affected by ourselves, which allows us to live within the world of "they" whilst being an active "dasein" through constant deliberation and shuffling of our understanding and direction of our desire, we can overcome our "thrownness" and become an active decision maker in who we want be or what type of "dasein" we want to be.

³ (All references can be found within the article enclosed.)

My take on authenticity.

From the studies into these two philosophers we can start to see that being authentic is more than being able to relate to oneself and your feeling's want and

³ Authenticity, First published Thu Sep 11, 2014, Authenticity, Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/authenticity/> (Accessed 3rd May 2019)

desires. It's about recognising first what it is to be a human being, as we're social creatures and this means we are in part created by this society, then we have to recognise after this who we want to be, not in retaliation to the sense of "they" but because it is what we want to be after we discover "thrownness" and after we have come to an understanding of what it is to be ourselves amongst this world of "they" we can start making decisions based upon our being a being with a sense of duality. And it is this tussle between working and thriving amounts the rules and guidance's left by "they" whilst also actualising what it is to be the certain individual "Daisien" in a social world.

It is not as simple as doing what we want because we want it is about recognizing what a want is, how it could have been formed by factors outside of me affecting me and then by understanding what being me is, and then after this, constantly deliberating upon the things I do and why I do them. To be authentic is to be intimately concerned with what type of person you are whilst also accepting your "ownness" in the circumstances of who you are, not letting inauthenticity be left down to the fact you're a social being inside a social world.

If we say that in a sentence authenticity can be described as a constant investigation into oneself and one's social context, then it leads me to think, then well how can a game be authentic? If being authentic requires thoughts about one's own subjectivity in context to its objective place amongst the world, then how can something that cannot think and does not possess being in the sense of self-awareness or subjectivity have any claim to being authentic? To say that this thing can create an authentic experience seems folly, unless Blizzard mean by authentic exactly the same as before, which would mean they misuse the word authentic.

If we think of a game as a creation, I think we have a much better chance of seeing how Blizzard have not misused the word authentic or are trying to mis-sell their product. A game is an object created by thinking subject, the developers. In this sense a game is indeed a thinking subject, but in a collective sense, many developer's thoughts influence what the game is. If we think of it in this sense, we can see how maybe what Blizzard mean to do by offering an authentic experience is to somehow allow you to play their game whilst being fully aware of the effect the social history have had on player's The "they" problem of Heidegger problem but not letting it affect your state of play and allowing you to feel as if you're actualising your "owness" whilst playing the game.

The game will be the same as before, it's whether or not you're able to understand that this may have an effect on why you play or how you play, but not allowing this to dictate the future enjoyment of playing the game.

I have a quote which I think will help to make this segment more fluid;

"The principal aim of writers on authenticity was to evoke in their readers the pathos of authenticity. They hoped to restore a personal mental power and sense of selfhood that modernity had diminished." ⁴

Modernity is what the new world of Warcraft will be full of, it's developers have created it with new technology and server's, what they have not done is create a sense of player's own responsibility within the quest for authenticity. Promising authenticity is almost a contradiction as each player will have to attune to their own levels of authenticity, and this process can't even begin unless the player finds themselves within a state that they recognise this themselves.

⁴ Golombi, Jacob ,1995, In Search of Authenticity From Kierkegaard to Camus, Routledge, First published 1995 This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

From this all I think it would be fair to argue that World of Warcraft the game cannot be Authentic in a philosophical sense, even if you can argue that it could be thought of as a thinking entity due to its being a creation of many different people and all of these people having an relationship with its direction the game will be the same as before and without any active players it would be impossible to check whether or not it was authentic. It will be a very similar game to “Vannila WoW” but the players that played that game created the experience. “Classic WoW” may have its own sense of Authenticity, which will be created when it is played, but to sell the two as the same would be wrong and may lead to a disappointed crowd.

This led me to conclude that Blizzard may not be able to deliver an authentic playing experience, as the emphasis of authenticity lies upon thinking subjects, only the players can create and authentic feeling of play.

This is why the next section of my dissertation will be focused upon how the player can play an re made game authentically and whether or not the playing world will be best suited to someone who is truly authentic or whether or not sometimes it is best to be what you’re needed to be in relation to social context.

‘Min/ Maxing’ and the over exposure of ideas.

Why is there an emphasis on players to play World of Warcraft authentically especially in its second iteration? IF you were to scroll through the Classic World of Warcraft Reddit page, one of its highest populated fan forum outlet’s you will see a multitude of post revolving around ideas of what class to play, what is the best race

class combo, will X class be viable in X situation as well as a whole host of question focused upon how to play certain classes and why.

This is not necessary a problem the problem for players has come from the exponential amount of data and analysis that has been done on the core features of World of Warcraft's end game Facilities.

None of this data was available back in 2004 when the game first launched and the reason people played certain classes and races came from a much more subjective standpoint, the choices made by people was not dictated by phenomena inside the game, other than the fact you had 8 races and 9 classes to choose from, the reason you would choose before you knew the ins and outs of the game. Your choice was influenced by how you saw yourself in relation to the class/race archetypes.

This caused a rift in players which is highlighted by their attitude in how to play World of Warcraft. Min/Maxer's as they're referred to are the type of player that use this abundance of information to almost dictate what they will and will not do whilst playing and who they will do it with.

They are the type of player that see the end goal of playing the game as completing its end game facilities, whether this be by completing the level 60 raids or by maximising their PvP stats. The best way to do this is by picking the strongest class/race and obtaining the strongest items available. They want to maximize efficiency and make the game as streamlined as possible by playing by the rule of Data or social norms within the game. Again there is no problem with this if this is how you wish to play but it does throw a spanner into Blizzards want of releasing an authentic experience, as in reality the authenticity is reliant upon the players rather than the wants of the developers.

Min/Maxing represents an attitude in which in order to succeed you must be a certain way, they represent a part of the social sphere within world of Warcraft that has certain expectations of playing standards and will naturally have exposure upon you due to encounters with them.

I hope you can see how the attitude of these players creates a place in which authenticity is at risk. If we compare the mentality to the idea that authenticity required, an intimate dedication to your own ideas and desire that had caused you to deliberate on your place amongst the world then we can see that Min/Maxing represents a mentality almost in a direct dichotomy with a quest for authenticity. Min/Maxing represents repetitions and standardized ways of play. If everyone were to play like this there would be very little variation between players and what they want and desires are.

The reason I wanted to go over what Min/Maxers are is because they represent a phenomenon that only became apparent in the later years of World of Warcraft's history. They're a problem in Blizzard's path for authenticity and for players themselves.

Guilds as Social Contracts.

Within the World of Warcraft social structures exist Guilds. Guilds are a collection of players that choose to partake in the various activities designed for larger groups of players, it was not uncommon, to find battles of 300 vs 300 for specific boss fights.

Joining a guild could vary in difficulty as that nature of the guild and what activities it wanted to partake in dictated what kind of player they would invite, casual guilds as they were referred to would usually invite anyone friendly whereas the more hard-core guilds might even require you to take part in a skype interview to help the recruiter understand your playing achievements and temperament.

The reason I want to describe what a guild is, is because the guild you played in, and it's endeavour it seeks to pursue will directly affect the direction of your game play. Especially players that seek to join more competitive guilds as you will be required to fulfil certain roles and spend time doing certain tasks.

Guilds allow you to achieve certain goals in regards to group content, but they can also limit your freedom in a sense of what you have time to experience in game. My question is, that does this limitation in freedom mean that players have to accept that some aspects of their game play will be influenced by an objective aim rather than a subjective desire, and does this mean that a big part of World of Warcraft's gameplay is unescapably in-authentic.

Social Constructs are an idea encountered by most if not all students of philosophy, Thomas Hobbes is mostly given credit for the idea, but the idea's announced by Socrates before his death involving how he owe the laws of Athens their respects as they had allowed for him to live the life that he had lived. Social Contracts involve ideas on why we create structures like politics and law, mostly studied around the idea of a state of Nature in which we are asked to imagine a World without any of our imposed structures or institutions. Without law and order the world could be imagined to be a very dire place indeed.

The reason the title includes Social Contracts is because, World of Warcraft is exactly that, the world the way it could be in a State of Nature. it is possible that the enemy faction slays, all the NPC's and players within the zones you need to progress, making you unable to play the game the way you would like. It is like the Hobbesian natural state, life can be brutish and short and guilds offer protection and comradery amongst the savageness of play, however in return, some guild will require varying

levels of involvement with players in the guild overall aims, if you do not meet standards your place within the guild could be forfeited.

There are parts of the game inaccessible to the Lone wolf player, and the majority of player do not wish to be the Lone Wolf. In order to gather allies, Guilds are created whilst enabling some freedoms, they limit others. A player's authenticity become at risk as they may be made to perform certain tasks in order to stay apart of the guild and not be constantly at threat of the other Faction.

It would seem as if guild is a cap upon an authentic play experience as they're a way of the collective informing the decisions of the subjective thinker. You can join with the intention of still achieving what you want but depending upon the wants of your guild you may be required to do more and more of what you are asked to do.

But the argument could be raised that choice is what matters in your Guild experience, your choice of Guild can be directly, but choice is not directly linked to authenticity and it will be the latter part of my dissertations focus to look upon how one might find themselves worried about authentic play and whether or not authenticity in the sense that has been described throughout this dissertation is best suited as a goal for a player.

It seems that all of the way in which the World of Warcraft social spheres and design mechanics interact have major influencing factors upon the player's ability to do thing's authentically and throughout this dissertation I've eluded to these factors. I have yet to elude upon why I think it is important that players keep a sense of authenticity whilst playing this game and why Blizzard want to achieve an authentic experience.

Playing the game your way.

I think it is now appropriate to look at what having a sense of authenticity can produce for players. The amount of things to do within the world and with the amount of people you will meet is enormous however the natural direction of player mentality and the overall arch of story line and game progression place player's in a situation where not keeping up leaves them at risk of not being able to complete or compete with the over players on their server. This can leave players alienated from the world unable to complete their chosen tasks and causing a disappointing experience and a feeling of having to do certain things because you have to rather than you want to. This is an experience felt by many players and they call it being burnt out.

From what we have so far explored within authenticity and what players can learn from it is that there are ways in which a player can start to understand themselves amongst the objective world accept that it has an influence on the wants and desires you may have and how it can shape the direction of ones play, through this realisation a player can start to re-establish what it is they enjoy about playing the game and reconfigure this with what is expected of them, now seeing that what is expected of them is also factored by the natural mechanics of the game and do not necessarily require completing. A relationship with the game in which you've assessed why it is you play the game, what are you hopes from it, what restrictions do you allow to be imposed upon yourself. All of these being subject to change as you should always be in touch with your future developments as a person. If we think of authenticity in Heidegger's term and how the constant relation with possible futures and a sense of "ownness" we can see how a player can experience a much more invigorating experience from game playing, and rather than idly repeating the task's a player must

complete in order to keep up. A player aware of the authenticity might not even see the need to keep up, and be able to play the game truly for one's own satisfaction without distraction from the crowd.

Authenticity on the whole sounds like a positive attribute however what would it mean for the general direction of game flow with a server if the majority of people were more concerned with having an authentic experience rather than completing the task hinted at as important by the game developers.

Throughout my dissertation I have tried to show how many factors can have an influence upon a player's experience but what I didn't try to think about is how this trying to show a separation between players want and game arch. It might also be a negative playing experience if all that a player wants to achieve is an authentic experience.

Warcraft is a social game, its facilities are based around this commonality between player's and what these player's desire. The reason World of Warcraft's first game has been remembered so fondly is due to the communities that were created within its boundaries. Communities shaped the direction of play within the server they inhabit. And from this I think it is right to say that the emphasis shouldn't be on authenticity of player or game, but rather of the player base as a whole, an acceptance how much influence each player has upon the social whole and how much previous social historical context will have upon the player opinions and desires.

We have to recognise that authenticity does not mean excluding oneself from pursuits that involve other's and their own pursuits but rather an acceptance that other exists and factors upon's oneself but I can form my own relationship with my playing experience that makes these experiences with other positive rather than chore some.

The last question I would like to ask is can a community achieve authentic game play, player's may be able to but a server filled with player's deeply concerned with authenticity might not be to every player's tastes and isn't exactly what is meant by an authentic community. The best chance for everyone to have an authentic experience is if the Warcraft community is aware of the factors influencing it that could cause the flow of game play be directed mostly by the knowledge of previous player, players could be playing by instruction guide rather than exploring what it is to be a player within the game.

It's not that it would be the best option to abolish all of the old way's that players used to play the game, rather remember that nothing created the memorable situations other than the player's involved back then. Which means that for any future situation the players of the present have to be aware of the possible futures that are apparent for them, and from this start to explore what kind of social dynamic inhabits your server and start to work around ideas that will best motivate the players.

Conclusion.

I think the biggest problem that I faced throughout my Dissertation is the vagueness of what authenticity is and why it is important for the players of “Classic WoW”. “One can portray authentic forms of life, but one cannot justify them rationally” as this quote expresses all I can really do in a dissertation about authenticity is try to elucidate to reason in which why it is important whilst also showing how it can become forgotten about and misrepresented as in Blizzards case. It is not something that exists objectively rather as a subjectively objective phenomenon in life and for these kinds of reason it is best left to the individual to be honest with themselves in their understanding of the subject.

Authenticity is something achieved by an individual, it is only taught indirectly as much as it highly subjective, this subjectivity in a sense places its existence into a somewhat metaphysical sphere. Is it actually achievable or is it just an idea used to help people explore their situation within the World? I tried to give a description and from that I would say that one major part of authenticity is the relationship with self, but the relationship is described as one of learning and exploring, this exploration is to be done without guidance in a sense as there is no objective end point. This is why I think a player of World of will deeply benefit from an exploration into authenticity before they play the game of the 27th of August 2019. As I have tried to show authenticity as a subject relates to what it is to be someone within a social world and World of Warcraft as a game in intrinsically social. Authenticity is related to how a person can create values and evaluate desires, amongst the one prescribe upon us by society and I tried to explain how this is a phenomenon that WoW player’s will experience in many different forms.

I do not believe that it appropriate of me to try and teach a person what authenticity is and how to achieve it, as how can I separate my prescription of what authenticity is from my own subjectivity. I would need to intimately understand the person I was trying to teach and this is a level of understanding we are yet to achieve between each other as humans. You can tell me but if what you tell me is directly linked with what it is to be “Dasani” for you I cannot know for sure and will always rely on some sense of inference. This does not mean it is inappropriate to explore the subject and try to come to a communicable understanding of it.

I have a quote from a more modern philosopher who will help to summarise this more appropriately as well;

‘The term ‘authenticity’ is used in so many different contexts that it may very well resist definition. Yet the most significant difficulty that arises in attempting to define it lies in the philosophical nature of its meaning. Even to speak of ‘the nature of its meaning’ is misleading, since it implies a kind of essentialism, a perspective of objectivity which is foreign to authenticity’⁵

From reading this you can see that any dissertation that sets out to actually define what authenticity is, risks either diminishing the value of authenticity in the means philosopher like Heidegger and Kierkegaard meant whilst also running the risk of stumbling upon contradiction after contradiction. It represents an elimination into the philosophy of one’s own being and that requires participation of the person seeking to learn more about it.

What this dissertation has shown is that Authenticity is something Blizzard cannot promise with the release of “Classic WoW” authenticity is linked with

⁵ Golombl, Jacob ,1995,In Search of Authenticity From Kierkegaard to Camus, Routledge, First published 1995 This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

subjectivity and although the game is a creation of many subjective thinkers' it is ultimately played by individual subjects, most of the time with others.

Although each individual acts as they imagine as an individual I have explored the many ways in way a player can be playing the game in a way dictated by social factors that only make it seem as if the player is making individual decisions, and I have explored how the player can start to deliberate over what these may be and how to overcome them.

My dissertation may not give much in the way of answers but I find this quite fitting to that which I have learnt of philosophy in the last three years. And I don't think it would be fitting to tell a person how to be authentic, rather it would be contradictory, and I hope that you have learnt and see why I have argued that it is important for players to keep a sense of authenticity whilst playing this game.

Bibliography.

Authenticity, First published Thu Sep 11, 2014, Authenticity, Available at:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/authenticity/> (Accessed 3rd May 2019)

Heidegger, Martin, 1962 [1927], *Being and Time*, J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (trans.), New York: Harper & Row.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/classicwow/>:

Don't min/max all the fun away, 20th February 2019, Available at

https://www.reddit.com/r/classicwow/comments/asnc7n/dont_minmax_all_the_fun_away/ (Accessed 3rd May 2019)

Burnout from playing vanilla?, 1st January 2018, Available at

https://www.reddit.com/r/wowservers/comments/7ndtjg/burnout_from_playing_vanilla/ (Accessed 3rd May 2019)

Golombi, Jacob, 1995, *In Search of Authenticity From Kierkegaard to Camus*, Routledge, First published 1995 This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhKkP8LryYM>, Restoring History: Creating WoW Classic (BlizzCon Classic Panel), 04 November 2018, Accessed December 1st 2018.